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CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

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CITY OF NEW ORLEANS HEALTH DEPARTMENT

GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19

March 21, 2022

I. PURPOSE

Since March 2020, the City of New Orleans has faced a significant public health challenge from the global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Recovery from the pandemic has included several phases that limited certain activities in the interest of public health and to prevent the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The New Orleans Health Department provides this document to provide guidance in the interest of preserving and protecting the public's health for residents and businesses in the City of New Orleans.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Coronavirus 2019 Disease ("COVID-19") is a communicable respiratory disease that can be easily transmitted especially in group settings. It is believed to be spread easily amongst the population by various means of exposure, including person to person respiratory droplet and aerosol transmission and attaching to surfaces for prolonged periods of time. Due to the contagious nature of the virus and emerging scientific evidence regarding transmission, non-pharmacological interventions are indicated to slow the spread of the virus, such as physical and social distancing, increased sanitation protocols, and use of personal protective equipment as much as possible while in public.

Slowing transmission through these measures safeguards public health and safety, protects the most vulnerable populations that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and protects the ability of health care providers to avoid surge conditions in response to an influx of patients. As a novel virus, scientific understanding of this virus is dynamic and rapid, and measures specific to reducing harm from COVID-19 must be guided by sound evidence-based research as it emerges. One known proven way to slow transmission is to limit interactions among people to the greatest extent practicable through non-pharmacological interventions such as those described above. Another such non-pharmacological intervention that has been proven to slow the spread of COVID-19 is the use of masks or face coverings. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") has established guidance on the appropriate types of masks and face coverings and their

use. The guidance may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>.

Another proven way to slow the spread of COVID-19 is through vaccination. The CDC has stated that vaccination is an effective tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and benefits both vaccine recipients and those they come into contact with, including persons who for reasons of age cannot themselves be vaccinated.

According to the City of New Orleans Home Rule Charter, Sec 4-1202, the Department of Health shall: “(1) Protect the health of the people of the City... adopt and enforce local health and sanitary regulations...[and] investigate the causes and institute measures for the control of epidemic, preventable and communicable disease.” The Department of Health thus promulgates guidance and temporary regulations to protect the public’s health during the SARS-CoV-2 infectious disease outbreak, with flexibility provided to the public health professionals to immediately respond in real time and adjust restrictions if necessary with adjustments based on public health data, guidance of the CDC and State health department, or applicable law.

III. COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVEL

On February 25, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new guidance for health officials to consider when making decisions about COVID-19 community prevention strategies. The new guidance assumes high levels of vaccination and high levels of population immunity from both vaccination and prior infections, which reduces the risk of medically significant disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 for most people. As of March 18, the City of New Orleans has fully vaccinated 76.9% of more all adults with the COVID-19 vaccine. However, only 68.2% of all New Orleanians have been fully vaccinated, and just 48.4% of the 5 to 17 year old population has been fully vaccinated.

Importantly, the CDC also recommends that local health officials take into consideration local metrics, information, and factors when making local decisions related to local COVID mitigation and prevention strategies. Examples of these additional factors include: wastewater surveillance, circulating novel variants of concerns, local high-risk congregate settings, and upcoming large events. In addition to the three metrics established by CDC above, the Health Department will continue to take into consideration local information and factors that provide context to COVID-19 community levels in Orleans Parish and the related need for community prevention strategies.

The updated CDC guidance includes new measures and thresholds for evaluating Covid-19 Community Levels, which focus on COVID-19 hospitalizations and the potential for strain on the local health system. The three measures and thresholds are currently defined as follows.

Total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days

To determine whether the Covid-19 Community Level is low, medium, or high, health officials must first evaluate whether the total number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the last 7 days is fewer than 200 or 200 or greater. As of March 18, the number of new cases per 100,000 in the past 7 days in Orleans Parish is 69.72.

New COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days

In addition to the rate of new cases, health officials must evaluate the number of new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days. As of March 18, the number of new COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 in Orleans Parish is 4.8.

Percent of staffed inpatient hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients

The third measure CDC recommends using to determine COVID-19 Community Level is the percent of staffed inpatient beds in local hospitals that are filled by COVID-19 patients. As of March 18, the percentage of staffed inpatient beds in Orleans Parish that are filled by COVID-19 patients is 1.8%.

COVID-19 Community Levels – Use the Highest Level that Applies to Your Community				
New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 people in the past 7 days	Indicators	Low	Medium	High
Fewer than 200	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	<10.0	10.0-19.9	≥20.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	<10.0%	10.0-14.9%	≥15.0%
200 or more	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	NA	<10.0	≥10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	NA	<10.0%	≥10.0%

The COVID-19 community level is determined by the higher of the new admissions and inpatient beds metrics, based on the current level of new cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days

As of March 18, 2022, Orleans Parish is categorized as having LOW COVID-19 Community Level, when considering the three CDC measures together and using the thresholds listed in the chart above. Therefore, the New Orleans Health Department is revising prior guidelines. These updated guidelines will be effective as of March 21, 2022 at 6:00 A.M.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTS, INSTITUTIONS, AND BUSINESSES IN THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

General Recommendations to All Individuals and Businesses

The New Orleans Health Department provides the following general recommendations to all individuals, institutions, and businesses to best mitigate the further spread of COVID-19 in New Orleans.

- All residents and visitors to the City of New Orleans should take personal responsibility to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, by assessing the individual risk of attending large and/or crowded gatherings, considering face coverings in public, and staying up to date on vaccinations.
- Individuals who are considered high risk for complications due to COVID-19, such as the elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions should maintain an elevated level of protection through avoiding large and/or crowded gatherings, considering face coverings in public, and staying up to date on vaccinations.
- Individuals are not required to wear a mask or face covering, except for the following:
 - Passengers and operators of public conveyances, including airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, buses, taxis, ride-shares, and the corresponding transportation hubs, as specified in Federal guidelines;
 - Any person working in a healthcare or long-term care setting, as specified in Federal guidelines
- Additionally it is recommended that masks or face coverings be worn by any person who works or lives in a congregate setting, who is immunocompromised, is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19 in the prior 10 days.
- Nothing in these guidelines shall prevent private businesses from requiring vaccinations, negative tests, masks or social distancing to conduct operations.

Safety Recommendations for Businesses and Institutions

All businesses and institutions should consider the following guidance to limit virus transmission:

- All essential and exempt businesses should take measures to prevent gatherings of employees, customers, visitors, and any other individuals while operating, to the maximum extent feasible;
- When working inside, doors and windows should be opened to promote air flow to the greatest extent possible and the number of people occupying a single indoor space should be limited to the smallest number feasible;
- All workers should have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during the duration of work, and frequent handwashing or hand sanitizing is required, including before entering and leaving job sites;
- All common spaces and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools, equipment, and vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected routinely;
- To the extent feasible, employers should be considerate of employees with pre-existing high- risk morbidities or health conditions;

Employee Isolation and Quarantine Recommendations

- Workers should not report to, or be allowed to remain at, a work or job site if sick or symptomatic with any symptom suggestive of COVID-19;
- Businesses should follow the CDC's quarantine and isolation guidance. Any employee who has contact with a worker or any other person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 should follow CDC's quarantine guidelines based on the exposed employee's vaccination status: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1227-isolation-quarantine-guidance.html>

Based on public health data and emerging evidence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and COVID-19 disease, the Director of Health may amend, update, revise, or clarify any portion of this document including public health milestones, recommendations, eligible businesses, or any other provision, in order to institute updated measures for the control of the outbreak and to protect the health and safety of the public.